

Official organ of Attakapas Historical Association

P. O. Box 107

St. Martinville, Louisiana 70582

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Harrie J. Periou, President

E. L. Guidry Jr., Vice-President

Mrs. Jerome A. Broussard, Treasurer

Mrs. Virginia K. Hine, Recording Secretary

Mrs. Ernest Yongue, Corresponding Secretary

***** NOTICE OF MEMBERSHIP MEETING *****

This is your official notice of a general membership meeting of the Attakapas Historical Association to be held at 7:00 P.M., October 17, 1966, at the St. Martin Parish Library, St. Martinville, Louisiana

At this meeting, items included in the agenda: the by-laws will be adopted, Chairmen of Standing Committees will be announced.

All members are urged to attend.

Harrie J. Periou, President

Board of Directors

The present Board of Directors Are: Harrie J. Periou, 316 South Main Street, Breaux Bridge 70317; Albert W. Silverman, P. O. Box 568, Franklin 70538; Mrs. Virginia Kyle Hine, Box 273, New Iberia 70560; Pearl Mary Sagura, 140 South Magnolia Street, Lafayette 70501; Mrs. Jerome A. Broussard, 111 Claiborne, St. Martinville, 70582; Mrs. Ernest Yongue, 913 Solomon Street, Breaux Bridge 70317; Keith E. Courrage, P. O. Box 161, New Iberia 70560; Mrs. David R. Williams, 324 N. Sterling, Lafayette 70501; Husey N. Breaux, 602 Beverly Drive, Lafayette 70501; Maurine Bergerie, 210 Holland, New Iberia 70560; E. L. Guidry Jr., Burdin Street, St. Martinville 70582; Mrs. Yvonne Carter, Gueydan 70542. The Board of Directors selected the officers, listed above.

ATTAKAPAS HISTORICAL ASSOCIATION FORMED

On May 30, 1966, the Attakapas Historical Association came into being with signing of the Incorporation papers. With great pleasure, the initial planning group of the St. Martin Parish Motional Library Week Committee saw YOU, the members, fill beyond its capacity the St. Martin Parish Library Conference Room, St. Martinville, to be a part of and participate in this momentous event.

As guest speaker, Winston DeVille mentioned the scarcity of accurate and authentic research in Louisiana's exciting and checkered heritage until the twentieth century. Briefly discussing recent publications and researchers, Mr. DeVille named the following: Jack Holmes, Bertram Korn, Walter Sautier, John McDermott, Jody Corrigan, Pierre Bouille, Pierre Oppitz, Milton and Norma Rieder, Katherine Bridges, Johnnie Anderson, Rev. Charles O'Neill S. J., Charles Peterson, Sam Wilson Jr., and Marcel Giraud.

On behalf of the organization, the writer here acknowledges and expresses appreciation to the Fifteenth District's Assistant O.A., C. Thomas Bienvenu Jr., for the many hours spent in conference, both writing and re-writing, to see that A. H. A. Articles of Incorporation would survive inspection with a magnifying glass. Mr. Bienvenu also explained the Charter to the incorporators before supervising the signing of the important document.

MONEY...QUES

That Ever Important Green Paper

With the potential of the Attakapas Historical Association yet to be explored, the fame and greatness of this group will depend upon YOU, the present members, and YOUR belief, work, and talk in behalf of YOUR organization. Those who attended the first general meeting, held May 2, 1966, will recall that it was decided to make all dues payable on a calendar year basis. While this means your initial 1966 dues give you a short year's membership, this writer is certain that you are aware extra expenses involved in establishing new organization, etc. all require dollars.

The good advice of the North Louisiana Historical Association and other similar societies enable A. H. A. to benefit from their past experience. Until more people learn about and join A. H. A., these first few years will be "lean" ones financially; the Board of Directors, with your support and the advice of the Finance Committee, will keep A. H. A. solvent.

At this time, membership is 161--a good beginning; however, you can help to double and triple this number. Remember to pay your dues promptly in January of each year and tell your friends about this new organization interested in preserving the heritage of South Louisiana -- the original Attakapas County and the heart of the Evangeline country.

INFORMATION NEEDED

At the meeting held on May 30, 1966, members present were asked to fill in a form showing type of activity in which they were interested. However, if you were not present or do not remember so doing, please send the information requested below to Attakapas Historical Association, P. O. Box 107, St. Martinville, Louisiana 70582.

Would you wish to participate in activities and/or sectional meeting of any of the following divisions: History, Landmarks, Genealogy, Traditions. Which ones?

To keep any organization moving forward, a certain amount of routine work is always involved. Can you type, address and stamp envelopes, operate a mimeograph machine? Such assistance may be wanted by your Publications Committee after it is formed. Do you have any special skills, such as drawing, lettering, etc.

If you would prefer, at this time, not to be an active worker in any activity, please so indicate.

By the time you receive this newsletter, your A. H. A. Board of Directors will have held at least two meetings organizing and planning for the next general session; providing the correct foundation and properly guiding the development of this society is a tremendous undertaking. These people need your support, encouragement, and understanding, and will welcome your suggestions.

It seems appropriate, in this first issue of the new Attakapas Gazette, to begin by tracing the development of the various parishes comprising the original Attakapas County. Such a thumbnail sketch can only outline briefly the various Acts of both the Territory of Orleans and its successor, the State of Louisiana.

NOTES SUMMARIZING THE DEVELOPMENT OF ATTAKAPAS COUNTY

The treaty providing for the cession of the Province of Louisiana from France to the United States was concluded April 30, 1803. Six months later the President approved an Enabling Act, passed by Congress, which provided for immediate governmental authority to "be exercised in such a manner as the President of the United States shall direct for maintaining and protecting the inhabitants of Louisiana in the free enjoyment of their liberty, property and religion." Under this authorization President Thomas Jefferson designated M. C. C. Claiborne, Governor of Mississippi, and General James Wilkinson as the Commissioners of the United States to receive the actual transfer of the province from the French Commissioners. This transfer took place at the Cabildo in New Orleans on December 20, 1803. Claiborne's official title was "Governor of the Mississippi Territory, Exercising the Powers of Governor Intendant of the Province of Louisiana."

In 1804, Congress passed a new act, approved March 26, effective October 1, 1804, which divided the Louisiana Purchase into two parts, the upper portion to be known as the "District of Louisiana," the lower as the "Territory of Orleans." The latter is described as:

"all that portion of country ceded by France to the United States, under the name of Louisiana, which lies south of the Mississippi River at the thirty-third degree of north latitude (the present Arkansas-Louisiana line) and extending west to the western boundary of said cession, shall constitute a Territory of the United States, under the name of the Territory of Orleans."

In the Attakapas country, along the Bayous Tache and Vermilion, there were extensive settlements. President Thomas Jefferson, in his message to Congress on November 14, 1803, described Louisiana residents as "... chiefly the descendants of the French and Canadians..." An 1803 census of the Attakapas indicates that it "contained 2,270 whites, 210 free people of color, 1,266 slaves; in all 3,746 souls..." Actual settlers had been granted 300,000 acres of land. Also listed were 58,871 horn cattle and 7,315 horses.

The following acts pertain to the creation of the original County of Attakapas; subsequent acts provide for the formation of the parishes of St. Martin, St. Mary, Lafayette, Vermilion and Iberia from the County of Attakapas.

- 1805 April 10 An Act to divide the Territory of Orleans into twelve counties. "The County of Attakapas shall comprehend the Parish of St. Martin, commonly called the Parish of Attakapas." Orleans Territorial Acts, 1804-5, 1st session of Legislative Council, Approved April 10, 1805.
- This act contains twenty-five sections which, in addition to the creation of the twelve counties, also sets forth the administrative offices to be contained in each and the terms of each.
- The article by Mr. Calhoun cited at the end of this paper is an excellent source for further reading on the "why's" and "wherefore's" of the County-Parish systems in Louisiana.
- 1807 March 31 "An Act Supplementary to an Act entitled "An Act providing for the Superior Court going Circuit," and for establishing Courts of Inferior Jurisdiction." This Act is 25 pages long and contains thirty-six sections. The ninth section provides for "dividing Orleans Territory into nineteen parishes." "And the Parish of the Attakapas, called the Parish of St. Martin, shall form the nineteenth."
- 1811 April 17 An Act to divide the county of Attakapas into two parishes. Or. Terr. A., 1811, 2nd session of 3rd Legislature, approved April 17, 1811.
- Sec. 1 - "That the County of Attakapas, shall be divided into two parishes, to be called the Parish of St. Martin and the Parish of St. Mary.
- Sec. 2 - "That the Parish of St. Martin shall contain all that part of the county north, or above a line running east from the upper line of the plantation of Francois Boutte, on the Bayou Teche, to the great lake, and west from the said Francois Boutte to the mouth of the petite Anse on the Bay; and the parish of St. Mary shall contain all the remainder of the county, that is to say, all that is south or below the said line."
- 1823 January 17 An Act to create and establish a new Parish in the County of Attakapas, to be called the Parish of Lafayette.
La. Acts, 1823, 1st session of 6th Legislature, Sec. 1. . . .
That the Parish of St. Martin is and shall be divided, and a new parish be formed out of the western part of the said parish, which shall be called and known by the name of the Parish of Lafayette.
- 1844 March 25 An Act to create a new Parish in the County of Attakapas to be called the Parish of Vermilion.
La. Acts, 1844, 2nd session of 16th Legislature No. 81.

Attakapas country's youngest member encountered problems in its creation. First proposed in an 1848 Louisiana Senate resolution, Louisiana Act No. 297, 1857, directed the State Engineer to ascertain the land contained in the proposed Parish of Iberia, to be created from parts of St. Martin and St. Mary Parishes. How

ever, the Civil War delayed the establishment of Iberia.

1857 March 21 Proposed creation of Iberia Parish from Parishes of St. Mary and St. Martin.
La. A., 1850 3rd Legislature, No. 297.

1868 October 30 An Act to form a new Parish to be called the Parish of Iberia.
La. A., 1868, 1st session of 1st Legislature, No. 208, Sec. 1.
. . . That from and after the passage of this act there shall be a new parish formed from a portion of the south part of the Parish of St. Martin and from a portion of the north part of the Parish of St. Mary, to be called and known by the name of the Parish of Iberia.

Nineteenth century maps locate a missing member of the original Attakapas County. According to Louisiana Act, No. 102, 1870, the Parish of Cameron in its organization, has as its easternmost boundary, ". . . the southwestern portion of the Parish of Vermilion..."

Thus, five parishes and a portion of another--St. Martin, St. Mary, Lafayette, Vermilion, Iberia and part of Cameron--all evolved from land originally part of the lostes des Attakapas. Who would endeavor to estimate the number of descendants of the "first families" of the Attakapas living by now in all parts of the world.

REFERENCES:

Calhoun, Robert Dabney. "The origin and early development of county-parish government in Louisiana," Louisiana Historical Quarterly. Vol. 18, No. 1, Jan. 1935.

Historical Records Survey. Louisiana County-Parish boundaries in Louisiana. Dept. of Archives, L. S. U., 1939.

Notes for a history of St. Martin parish...(xerox copy of a typed manuscript).

U. S. Congress. American State Papers. Gov't Print. Off., 1832-61. Vol. 2.